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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: TOP STORIES, TERRORISM/MILITARY, POLITICAL ISSUES, ECON/BUSINESS, MISCELLANEOUS - OCTOBER 28, 2009

Summary: All major newspapers highlighted the arrival of Secretary Clinton on Wednesday. Her remarks that "U.S. is turning a new page in ties" with Pakistan also received prominent display. Newspapers reported that President Zardari and Army Chief Kayani held a meeting "ahead of Secretary Clinton's visit." The security forces' claim of killing 42 militants in South Waziristan also received front page display. Several major dailies highlighted a report that an "army brigadier narrowly escaped an attempt on his life in Islamabad." Information Minister Kaira's statement declaring that "President Zardari was ready to surrender key powers to Prime Minister" was also prominently covered. Most major newspapers ran editorials on the possible implications of the meeting between President Zardari and PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif held in Islamabad the other day. End Summary.

TOP STORIES

News Story: "U.S. Turning A New Page In Ties, Says Hillary" "Dawn" (10/28)

"A lot of military equipment is 'fungible' and mobile and can be used in different places, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told 'Dawn' when asked if it's fair to demand that a Pakistani military unit using a certain weapon on the Afghan border leave that weapon behind when it's transferred to another place. In a wide-ranging interview, Secretary Clinton said that since the beginning of the Waziristan operation, the U.S. had been trying to accelerate its assistance for the Pakistani military... 'I hope on this trip I will be able to start that ball rolling, so to speak, so that maybe some in your country will say, no, I really didn't have a good opinion before,' she said. 'I thought it was all about are you going to be with us or against us on the war on terrorism, but this is a new day. That's why we're turning a new page.'

News story: "Hillary Clinton Due Today On 3-Day Visit" "Dawn" (10/28)

"U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is due in Islamabad on Wednesday on a three-day 'goodwill visit' to address popular concerns and suspicions about America in Pakistan. (Story also front paged in all newspapers)

News story: "Hillary Due. Energy Bail Out Expected" "Pakistan Observer" (10/28)

"Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State who is due today (Wednesday) in Islamabad is to announce the hard core decisions for bailing out

Pakistan from gigantic energy crisis, a senior official told Pakistan Observer."

News story: "President, Army Chief Meet Ahead Of Hillary's Visit" "The News" (10/28)

"Sources said Tuesday's meeting focused on the security situation of the country and the ongoing military operation in South Waziristan. Political analysts were attaching high significance with Tuesday's meeting as it was held at a time when U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is reaching Islamabad today (Wednesday). It is expected that Hillary would hold talks with the government on the security situation and the Kerry-Lugar Law." (Story also front paged in all newspapers)

News story: "Forty Two Militants Killed In South Waziristan" "Dawn" (10/28)

"The military has claimed to have killed 42 militants in South Waziristan during 24 hours since Monday evening. One soldier lost his life. The Inter-Services Public Relations said that troops continued their advance towards Sararogha, a stronghold of followers of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan Chief Hakimullah Mehsud, after flushing out militants from their positions around Kotkai. A number of villages have been cleared and important hills have been secured." (Story also front paged in all newspapers)

TERRORISM/MILITARY ISSUES

News story: "Brigadier Escapes Bid On Life In Islamabad" "Dawn" (10/28)

"A high-ranking army officer narrowly escaped an attempt on his life here on Tuesday. This was the second attack on a senior officer here in less than a week. Brig Waqar Ahmad Malik, director of defence services guards at the GHQ, was going to a bank along with his mother in his official car bearing private registration number when a gunman in khaki and wearing a shawl opened fire on him."

News story: "GHQ Siege Mastermind Captured, Claim Police" "Dawn" (10/28)

"Security agencies captured on Tuesday 'Qari' Ishtiaq, a key 'commander' of the Punjabi Tehrik-i-Taliban network, who allegedly masterminded the Oct 10 attack on the army headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi."

News Story: "Taliban Good At Posturing, Poor At Resisting" "Daily Times" (10/28)

"The Taliban are putting up no 'extraordinary resistance' in South Waziristan, where a military operation was recently launched - with the top leadership of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan believed to be on the move to safer places, officials said on Tuesday."

News Story: "7 Militants, 2 Security Men Killed In Mohmand" "The Nation" (10/28)

"At least seven militants were killed and 12 others got injured during clashes with security forces here in tehsil Baizai on Tuesday. Two security personnel were also killed in the clashes."

News Story: "Waziristan IDPs" "The News" (10/28)

"Certain inhabitants of South Waziristan have complained that the government and the nation had ignored them despite the fact that they have been suffering due to the so-called "war against terror" since June 2002."

News Story: "U.S. Pressure Strains Ties With Pakistan, Says NYT" "The Nation" (10/28)

"Pakistan's counterinsurgency operation in South Waziristan may be welcome in the United States but the push is straining the delicate Washington-Islamabad relations, according to New York Times."

News Story: "No Infiltration From Western Border: Malik" "Daily Times" (10/28)

"Interior Minister Rehman Malik has denied reports on infiltrations from across the Western border, saying the rumors are false, and 'we are ready to counter any such threat effectively.'"

News Story: "U.S., NATO Need To Do More In Afghanistan: ISPR DG" "Daily Times" (10/28)

"The 'do more' mantra of the coalition forces in Afghanistan is not helping Pakistan, Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Maj. Gen. Athar Abbas said on Tuesday, and demanded that the U.S. and NATO forces 'do more' on their side of the border. The chief military spokesman told a private TV channel that Pakistan had deployed a 'huge number' of military and paramilitary forces on the border. He said Pakistan had done a lot to stop infiltrations on either side of the border, and it was now 'their turn to reciprocate in effective manner.'

News story: "Kerry Stresses On Sustained Assistance For Pakistan" "Dawn" (10/28)

"The United States has enormous stakes in Pakistan's stability and must assist the country economically and militarily to help it overcome serious challenges, and at the same time make it clear to the Pakistanis that Washington respects their sovereignty, Senator John Kerry advocated. 'We need to make it clear that we respect their (Pakistanis) sovereignty,' he stated at the Council on Foreign Relations while speaking about U.S. policy toward the region in the light of his visit to Pakistan and Afghanistan last week."

News Story: "Obama To Sign Military Aid Bill This Week" "The News" (10/28)

"U.S. President Barack Obama has said he plans to sign the U.S. Defence Authorization Bill 2010, which puts tougher restrictions on military aid to Pakistan, later this week. Speaking to U.S. service members at the Naval air station in Jacksonville, Florida, on Monday President Obama said that tens of millions of dollars of U.S. taxpayers money was going waste on certain projects, which even U.S. military says are of no use."

News Story: "EU Vows Support For Pakistan's Anti-Terror Drive" "Dawn" (10/28)

"European Union foreign ministers on Tuesday vowed full support for Pakistan's counter-terror drive and said the 27-nation bloc was ready to help civilians affected by the military offensive in South Waziristan. In their most comprehensive overview to date of relations with Pakistan, European governments also pledged to strengthen the EU's emerging strategic relationship with Pakistan."

News Story: "Money Allocated For Taliban To Give Up Resistance In U.S. Defense Bill" "The News" (10/28)

"The handsome alluring amount of money has been allocated in U.S. defense bill for Taliban over withdrawal of resistance against allied forces in Afghanistan, Geo news reported on Tuesday. The Chairman of U.S. Senate Armed Committee (USSAC) Senator Carl Levin has said a new Article has been made part of U.S. defense bill, allocating money for Taliban to lay down arms and surrender to U.S.-led allied forces in Afghanistan."

Editorial: "Micromanaging Pakistan" an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (10/28)

"Hillary Clinton will be in Islamabad today and many Pakistanis will suffer the major inconvenience of finding the airport and all routes leading to it closed. But the real issue is the intrusive U.S. micromanagement of Pakistan that is already underway. The extent of the handing over of sovereignty to the Americans is only being revealed bit by scandalous bit. Nor is this micromanagement limited to security related issues. Instead, we now have a demand from the Americans to end all power subsidies and to up the price of CNG to bring it at par with petrol. Clearly, the U.S. is either unaware of the social situation in the country, or is deliberately seeking to create further discontent within the public at large, which is already finding it difficult to manage a daily existence in the face of spiraling prices. Now Ms. Clinton, in the style of the old

viceroy, will have arrived to give her instructions for our energy sector."

Editorial: "Senator John Kerry's Veiled Threat" an editorial in the second-largest, nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (10/28)

"American Senator John Kerry has said that Pakistan is the hub of al-Qaeda and the U.S. is still facing threat of attacks by al-Qaeda.

Speaking at U.S. Senate's foreign relations committee council the other day he said that American indifference can destabilize Pakistan.... Senator Kerry's statement in fact highlights the American plan under which it wants to make a Tora Bora of Pakistan.... Coupled with Drone attacks, American military's ground attacks on Pakistan cannot be ruled out."

Editorial: "The Swelling Number Of IDPs" an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (10/28)

"Civilians continue to flee from South Waziristan following the intensification of fighting between the militants and troops and the number is swelling with each passing day.... It was estimated that around 250,000 could eventually leave South Waziristan but it appears that the IDPs number would swell to a much higher figure due to ferocity in fighting.... The need of the hour is that the Government and the media must draw the attention of the people and international community to rush aid of all sorts so that these ill fated homeless could be looked after till militancy is rooted out from their areas."

Editorial: "Growing Signs Of U.S. Defeat In Afghanistan," an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (10/28)

"The current year has proved a deadly period for the United States and NATO forces in Afghanistan since the ouster of the Taliban government in 2001. The rise in death toll of U.S. soldiers at a time when Washington is discussing the possibility of sending more troops to Afghanistan is a matter of serious concern. NATO officials have admitted that with the recent killings, the number of casualties of foreign forces in Afghanistan has risen to 424, including 256 U.S. troops. These statistics clearly demonstrate that the U.S. and its allies are heading towards a humiliating defeat. Meanwhile, the U.S. media and influential political circles are also terming Afghanistan as another Vietnam for their country. If the Obama Administration is endowed with some insight, it should not further delay the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan."

Opinion: "Civilians In The War Zone" an op-ed by Zubeida Mustafa in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (10/28)

"We are constantly being exhorted to treat the war on terror as our own war and not theirs (the Americans'). We are told to own it. From that one deduces that we should make our due contribution to the war effort. One would not argue with that line of thinking - no, not at this stage. Now that Pakistanis find themselves caught in this quagmire of conflict they do not have much of a choice except to try and wade their way out. For this they are extending full support to the army and the government.... In the present war we have no idea of the number of civilian casualties because independent observers are not allowed access to this area. The ISPR prefers to shroud its press releases in ambiguity. When it gives the figures of those killed it lists the number of soldiers 'martyred' and the number of terrorists killed. The latter presumably include civilian non-combatants. Thus a week after Rah-i-Nijat was launched in South Waziristan the ISPR stated 160 people had been killed which included 142 Taliban.... The need is to revise the laws and make those concerning civilians more comprehensive."

Opinion: "Hooked On U.S. Aid" an op-ed by Shamshad Ahmad in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (10/28)

"Despite its terror-chilled, heavily picketed and dusky atmosphere, Islamabad is warming up to the very thought of U.S. aid flowing in

cash in the coming months. The Kerry-Lugar Bill storm is not yet fully blown over, but the Gilani cabinet, like its Foreign Minister, acted hastily to show its readiness to accept the conditionality-ridden aid-package.... Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's forthcoming visit to Islamabad should be a welcome opportunity for both sides to discuss and overcome these raging issues. The purpose must be to strengthen, not weaken their relationship by infusing in it greater political, economic and strategic content. U.S. engagement with Pakistan must go beyond the war on terror. It must reach out to democratic and liberal forces and the business community in our country, and also our younger generation, which may resent U.S. power but not its ideals."

Opinion: "Sovereignty And Imperialism" an op-ed by Pervaiz Nazir in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (10/28)

"The perception regarding Pakistan as a 'friend of the U.S.' and as a 'self-subverter' of its own sovereignty wrongly suggests that only clarification and confidence building is needed to iron out problems between Pakistan and the U.S.; whereas an alternative perspective of unequal power relations requires that policies and strategies are needed that can resist an imperial power.... The United States' attempts to universalizing its power and ambitions are not new."

Opinion: Last Tango In Washington -- II" an op-ed by Anjum Niaz in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (10/28)

"Well, the Pakistani army is back to barracks but its Chief is very much in the picture even today. He has refused to accept the Kerry-Lugar Bill (and rightly so) because the drafters of the bill have stabbed our army in its back by giving the upper hand to Zardari. 'Divide and rule' is an adage which an idiot did not phrase. He/she knew exactly that power plays best when you rule over a house divided. It is ironical that the U.S. is now trying to get

the presidency and the GHQ at loggerheads over the Kerry-Lugar Bill having used it to its advantage by getting Gen. Kayani to be the midwife at the birth of the NRO!"

Opinion: "No Plan For Pakistan" an op-ed by Rafia Zakaria in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (10/28)

"Ultimately, the absence of a cohesive U.S. strategy towards Pakistan beyond urgings to take the threat of the Taliban seriously is reflective of an omission that is likely to impose both political and strategic costs on the United States. For Pakistan, the war against the Taliban is territorial and directed specifically at gaining back control of specific regions. For the U.S., the connections drawn between its national security concerns and fighting territorial wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan are far more complex. The evasive logic of these connections has become especially problematic when U.S. policy towards Pakistan is exposed as a lurid hodgepodge of drone attacks, aid packages and diplomatic urgings to fight the Taliban. Given the already fragile relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan, the absence of a comprehensive and clear plan towards the region does little to reassure Pakistanis that their status as American allies will continue in the years to come."

POLITICAL ISSUES

News Story: "Top Military Appointments, Assemblies' Dissolution; President Ready to Surrender Key Power To PM" "Daily Times" (10/28)

"President Asif Ali Zardari is willing to curtail presidential powers given under Article 58(2b), Federal Information Minister Qamar Zaman Kaira said on Tuesday. Kaira told a private TV channel that the president wanted to hand over some of the authority to parliament, and was also ready to transfer the powers related to the dissolution of assemblies and the appointment of services chiefs to Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani. He said the president wanted continuity and stability in the parliamentary system."

News Story: "Zardari Agrees To Surrender Powers" "The News" (10/28)

"President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Tuesday decided to form a special committee for better working relationship and political and administrative coordination with the PML-N. They also discussed the forthcoming visit of U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who is arriving here today (Wednesday). Sources said the president took the Prime Minister into confidence on his meeting with Nawaz Sharif and the implementation of the Charter of Democracy."

Editorial: "Negative Expectations From 'Z-N' Meeting" an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (10/28)

"The general impression in the media about Monday's meeting between President Asif Ali Zardari and the PML-N leader Mr. Nawaz Sharif was that it broke no new ground.... The anti-PPP media did not spell out what it wanted from the meeting of the two party bosses, but they kept talking about the 'unconstitutionality' of the NRO, corruption in the government and a sell-out of national honor to the U.S. while accepting the Kerry-Lugar law."

Editorial: "Keep Meeting Even Without Breakthroughs" an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (10/28)

"The confusion would most probably prevail despite meeting of the two leaders. We, however, believe that the situation demands that the leaders of the two parties should continue to have more meetings even if there is no breakthrough as dialogue helps removes misunderstandings and promotes national unity and harmony."

ECON/BUSINESS

News Story: "Protecting Lifeline Consumers: U.S. Urges Pakistan To Launch 'Voucher Scheme'" "Business Recorder" (10/28)

"The U.S. has urged Pakistan to launch a 'voucher scheme' similar to that of Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) or set up an

"Universal Support Fund" to protect lifeline consumers, using up to 50 units of electricity per month after elimination of all kinds of subsidies in power sector."

News Story: "IMF delegation Declines To Visit Pakistan: Next Review Of Economy From November 2-12 In Dubai" "Business Recorder" (10/28)

"The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has once again refused to conduct the review of the economy under the Standby Arrangement (SBA) in Pakistan due to security concerns.... Sources told Business Recorder here on Tuesday that the meetings for the next review were scheduled to be held from November 2-12."

News Story: "ECC Forms Panel To Probe Gas Loadshedding In Winter" "Dawn" (10/28)

"A meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) held here on Tuesday formed a committee to analyze the issue of proposed natural gas load management program for winter."

MISCELLANEOUS

News Story: "Nabbed With Illegal Arms Again" "The Nation" (10/28)

"Once again, 4 American nationals were caught red-handed by Capital Police in the wee hours of Tuesday when they were carrying weapons publicly. However, they managed to secure release and continue their journey to a mysterious destination, sources informed."

News Story: "Eight U.S. Troops Killed In Afghan Bomb Attacks" "Dawn" (10/28)

"Eight American soldiers and an Afghan civilian were killed Tuesday in bomb attacks in southern Afghanistan, NATO said. The deaths occurred in what a statement referred to as 'multiple complex IED attacks', referring to improvised explosive devices that have become the scourge of troops fighting a resurgent Taliban."

News Story: "first U.S. Official Resigns To Protest War" "The Nation" (10/28)

"An American official resigned from his post in a Taliban stronghold in Afghanistan in protest of the Afghan war, bringing into sharp focus the divide over the United States' policy towards the strife-torn country, according to The Washington Post."

News Story: "PBC-VOA Cooperation As Per Law" "The Nation" (10/28)

"A spokesperson for Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation has categorically rebutted a misleading news item published in daily 'The Nation' on October 27, 2009 about PBC-VOA agreement. The spokesperson said the professional and technical cooperation between PBC and VOA is in accordance with the Pakistani law and rules of business."

News Story: "PML-Q Submits Motion To Discuss VOA-PBC Deal" "The Nation" (10/28)

"PML-Q has submitted an adjournment motion in the National Assembly secretariat to discuss the deal of Voice of America with Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation to extend its media propaganda network into Pakistan. VOA was already running its media propaganda in Afghanistan to mould the public opinion in their favor and now they were about to step in here with the aim to dilute the growing public resentment against them."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)
Patterson